

21
CAGE
E185
.86
.C78
1883

THE BLACK WOMAN OF THE SOUTH.

The Rev. Alexander Crummell, D.D., formerly a missionary in Africa and now Rector of St. Luke's Church in Washington, D. C., is a native of Africa, a graduate of one of the leading Universities of England, who adds to the strength and graces of a sound scholarship, the devotion of a noble Christian character.

From an address made by him upon the "Needs and Neglects of the Black Woman of the South," we quote his plea for "Woman's Work for Woman." Referring to the Negro woman in slavery days, he says:

"She was a 'hewer of wood and a drawer of water.' She had to keep her place in the gang from morn till eve, under the burden of a heavy task, or under the stimulus or the fear of a cruel lash. She was a picker of cotton. She labored at the sugar mill and in the tobacco factory. When, through weariness or sickness, she had fallen behind her allotted task, then came, as punishment, the fearful stripes upon her shrinking, lacerated flesh.

"Her home life was of the most degrading nature. She lived in the rudest huts, and partook of the coarsest food, and dressed in the scantiest garb, and slept, in multitudinous cabins, upon the hardest boards!

"There was no sanctity of family, no binding tie of marriage, none of the fine felicities and the endearing affections of home. Few of these things were the lot of the Southern black woman. Instead, thereof, a gross barbarism, which tended to blunt the tender sensibilities, to obliterate feminine delicacy and womanly shame, came down as her heritage from generation to generation; and it seems a miracle of providence and grace that, notwithstanding these terrible circumstances, so much struggling virtue lingered amid the rude cabins, that so much womanly worth and sweetness remained, as slaveholders themselves have borne witness to.

"Freed, legally, she has been; but the act of emancipation had no talismanic influence to reach to and alter and transform her degrading social life. The truth is, 'Emancipation Day' found her a prostrate and degraded being; and, although it has brought numerous advantages to her sons, it has produced but the simplest changes in *her* social and domestic condition. She is still the crude, rude, ignorant mother. Remote from cities, the dweller still in the old plantation hut, neighboring to the sulky, disaffected master-class, who still think her freedom was a personal robbery of themselves, none of the 'fair humanities' have visited her humble home. The light of knowledge has not fallen upon her eyes. The fine domesticities which give the charm to family life, and which, by the refinement and delicacy of womanhood, preserve the civilization of nations, have not come to *her*. She has still the rude, coarse labor of men. With her rude husband, she still shares the hard service of a field-hand. Her house, which shelters, perhaps, some six or eight children, embraces but two rooms. Her furniture is of the rudest kind. The clothing of the household is scant and of the coarsest material; has oft-times the garniture of rags, and for herself and offspring is marked, not seldom, by the absence

of both hats and shoes. She has rarely been taught to sew, and the field-labor of slavery times has kept her ignorant of the habitudes of neatness and the requirements of order. Indeed, coarse food, coarse clothes, coarse living, coarse manners, coarse companions, coarse surroundings, coarse neighbors, both white and black, yea, everything coarse, down to the coarse, ignorant, senseless religion, which excites her sensibilities and starts her passions, go to make up the life of the masses of black women in the hamlets and villages of the South. This is the state of black womanhood.

"And now look at the *vastness* of this degradation. If I had been speaking of the population of a city, or town, or even a village, the tale would be a sad and melancholy one. But I have brought before you the condition of *millions of women*. And when you think that the masses of these women live in the rural districts; that they grow up in rudeness and ignorance; that their former masters are using few means to break up their hereditary degradation, you can easily take in the pitiful condition of this population and forecast the inevitable future to multitudes of females, unless a mighty special effort is made for the improvement of the black womanhood of the South.

"I am anxious for a permanent and uplifting civilization to be engrafted on the Negro race in this land. And this can only be secured through the womanhood of a race. If you want the civilization of a people to reach the very best elements of their being, and then, having reached them, there to abide as an indigenous principle, you must imbue the *womanhood* of that people with all its elements and qualities. Any movement which passes by the female sex is an ephemeral thing. Without them, no true nationality, patriotism, religion, cultivation, family life, or true social status, is a possibility. In this matter it takes two to make one—mankind is a duality. The male may bring, as an exotic, a foreign graft, say, of civilization, to a new people. But what then? Can a graft live or thrive of itself? By no manner of means. It must get vitality from the stock into which it is put; and it is the women who give the sap to every human organization which thrives and flourishes on earth.

"I plead, therefore, for the establishment of at least one large '*Industrial school*' in every Southern State for the black girls of the South. I ask for the establishment of schools which may serve specially the *home* life of the rising womanhood of my race.

"I want *boarding schools* for the *industrial training* of one hundred and fifty or two hundred of the poorest girls, of the ages of twelve to eighteen years.

"I wish the intellectual training to be limited to reading, writing, arithmetic and geography.

"I would have these girls taught to do accurately all domestic work, such as sweeping floors, dusting rooms, scrubbing, bed-making, washing and ironing, sewing, mending and knitting.

"I would have the trades of dress-making, millinery, straw-plating, tailoring for men, and such like, taught them.

"The art of cooking should be made a specialty, and every girl should be instructed in it.

"In connection with these schools, garden plats should be cultivated, and every girl should be required daily, to spend at least an hour in learning the cultivation of small fruits, vegetables and flowers.

"It is hardly possible to exaggerate either the personal, family or society influence which would flow from these schools. Every class, yea, every girl in an out-going class, would be a missionary of thrift, industry, common-sense, and practicality. They would go forth, year by year, a leavening power into the houses, towns and villages of the Southern black population; girls fit to be the wives of the honest peasantry of the South, the worthy matrons of their numerous households.

"I am looking after the domestic training of the *masses*; for the raising up of women meet to be the helpers of poor men, the *rank and file* of black society, all through the rural districts of the South.

"A true civilization can only be attained when the life of woman is reached, her whole being permeated by noble ideas, her fine taste enriched by culture, her tendencies to the beautiful gratified and developed, her singular and delicate nature lifted up to its full capacity, and then, when all these qualities are fully matured, cultivated and sanctified, all their sacred influences shall circle around ten thousand firesides, and the cabins of the humblest freedmen shall become the homes of Christian refinement through the influence of the uplifted and cultivated black woman of the South."

The above appeal is in the line of our American Missionary Association work. While we have higher schools and institutions for more thorough education, which these Negro women need as much as any women in the world, we are increasingly developing this idea which Dr. Crummell eloquently pleads.

We remind our friends and those Christian women who are interested in the uplifting of Negro womanhood, that the American Missionary Association, the *ordained agency* of the Congregational Churches for this work, could do much more of it if the means were forthcoming. The marked success of the domestic training in our schools at Tougaloo, Miss., Talladega, Ala., Thomasville, Ga., Memphis, Tenn., and other points, shows the advantage gained in the twenty-five years' experience which the A. M. A. has had in its work for the Negroes.

We need the co-operation of all Christian women in carrying on these Industrial Schools already established, and to enable us to establish and carry forward *many more*.

YOUNG FOLKS.

WHAT SUSIE FOUND AT TOUGALOO.

(SEE FEBRUARY AMERICAN MISSIONARY.)

A roomful of girls of various sizes and complexions, all very much intent upon their work, and no one thinking just at that moment of a traveled fairy daughter, to adopt and love as her own, sent by a beneficent and tender-hearted northern "Fay." I doubt if Susie ever before saw so many "little women" laboring with needles and trying to set the troublesome stitches straight and even, to keep the thread from tangling and the seam clean. The results are far from perfection, but they are encouraging.

Some of the children wear thimbles, and some set them upon their desks and wiggle the needle through without their aid. Here is a child so tiny that no thimble in the box will serve her. She has a delicate face, with big brown eyes, and her fingers are the slenderest of appendages to her atoms of hands. Her sister, a year or so older, has a round, chubby face, with plump, dimpled, brown hands, but these fat fingers also must grow to the smallest thimble. Here is a quiet, modest little girl whose five baptismal names, Cynthia Ann Finetta Bloomfield Celeste, furnish her nothing prettier for every day use than "Lusty." She could not thread a needle or tie a knot when she joined the Hope Band, and the second year she wore one of the smallest thimbles with a bit of cloth inside for "chinking" to keep it on. Here Susie's sympathies are drawn out towards a thin, nervous-looking little Frances, who has a hand and foot crippled. She walks painfully along to her place and holds her work at a disadvantage in the poor little cramped left hand, but she likes to be there with the others.

Most of the heads are covered with little tight braids, on some heads standing at every angle, on some laid smoothly down, one braid tied to another. A few have their curly hair cropped close, and here is a little girl with a bushy mass overshadowing her lively face. She takes but a stitch or two until she goes up to the front and holds her work out for her teacher's inspection. Some time elapses before that lady can notice it and say, "That is pretty good, Lena; now go right on carefully." Lena returns slowly to her place, takes a stitch or two more and repeats the performance. When will the work be completed? O no, that is the way she used to do, but now—

A middle-sized "Topsy" comes pushing rudely forward, tossing her head and whispering disagreeable things to those she has to pass, and Susy hopes she will not be brought into any closer relations with her, when she happens to see her tenderly fondling a broken-armed, broken-legged dollie, while her work is being adjusted, and thinks somewhat better of her. There are several Lilies and Roses in this growing garden. The lilies are not white and the roses are not red, but more attractive and interesting to their teacher's eyes than the black pansies the flower gar-

